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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR USG-GOT UNGA MEETINGS

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Turkish officials will be highly visible in New York for this year,s UN General Assembly as their years-long effort to secure election to a UN Security Council seat representing the Western European and Others group comes to a climax. U.S. officials will want to engage the Turks on a wide range of topics including Russia/Georgia, Iraq, terrorism, Iran, energy, the Middle East, and Cyprus. U.S.-Turkish relations have improved in the past year as we expanded intel sharing on PKK terrorists in northern Iraq, making a more productive and cooperative dialogue on the range of other issues possible. END SUMMARY

UN Security Council Seat

12. (C) In its bid for a non-permanent 2009/2010 Western European and Others group UN Security Council seat, Turkey has embarked on a charm campaign. It has wooed potential votes by hosting a series of regional cooperation summits with African, Caribbean, and Pacific Island nations as well as publicizing its humanitarian outreach to Africa and contributions to UN peacekeeping.

Caucasus - Georgia

13. (C) Russia,s invasion of Georgia reminded Turks they are NATO,s front line in the Caucasus against their top trading partner -- Russia, on which they depend for 65 percent or more of their natural gas. Turkey is deeply concerned about the prospects for more instability or revived East-West confrontation. Despite misgivings, Turkey approved all our Black Sea ship transit requests and rebuffed Moscow's complaints. The Turks realize that their hesitancy to confront Russia directly and their uncoordinated proposal of a &Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform8 (CSCP) earned some ire in Washington, but have worked hard to repair the damage and reassure us of the primacy of U.S.-Turkish relations and NATO in meetings with U/S Burns and CJCS Mullen.

Turkey-Armenia Relations

14. (C) President Gul,s historic September 6 visit to Yerevan, Turkey,s inclusion of Armenia in its proposed Caucasus platform, and the GOT,s ongoing efforts at rapprochement are clear signs of Turkey,s seriousness about reversing decades of Turkish-Armenian bad blood and promoting

regional stability. GOT efforts should receive enthusiastic U.S. support.

PKK/Iraq

¶5. (C) Real-time U.S. intelligence provided to the Turkish military has fueled over 100 coordinated cross-border strikes against the PKK in northern Iraq since November. A number of Turkish officials have suggested that the PKK may be near the breaking point, although PKK attacks) including bombings in Istanbul, Izmir, and Mersin) continue.

¶6. (C) Ties with Iraq continue to develop. Erdogan visited Baghdad July 10 -- the first Turkish PM in Iraq since 1990 -- and agreed to engage on a host of bilateral political, economic, and security issues. Turks held their first public contacts with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials in May. GOT officials remain concerned about the stability and unity Iraq and fear a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. troops. The Turks are interested in Iraqi gas development and are frustrated by lack of progress on an Iraqi hydrocarbons law. They are wary on Kirkuk, but support UNAMI efforts to broker a provincial election law.

Iran

¶7. (C) Iran,s intransigence on the nuclear issue complicates Turkish efforts to develop relations with its energy-rich neighbor. During President Ahmadinejad's August 14-15 visit to Istanbul and FM Babacan's five meetings with Iranian FM Mottaki since June, the Turks have pressed Iran to accept the P5/1 offer. President Gul told U/S Burns that the Iranians are &out of touch with reality.8 While Turkey wants to negotiate a gas investment deal, GOT officials tell us that Iran is unwilling to produce a commercially viable deal. We should advise the Turks of our next steps on the nuclear issue, seek their continued help and discourage energy deals that would be both unreliable for Turkey and unhelpful to UNSC diplomacy on the issue.

Middle East

¶8. (C) Turkey has hosted four rounds of Syria-Israel talks. They say all sides are serious, though PM Olmert,s resignation and Syrian reluctance to move too far down this path before U.S. elections argues against significant progress in the short-term. Erdogan actively worked for the Lebanese presidency compromise in May and has remained engaged to support Siniora, reportedly speaking with him last week. We should encourage Turkey,s work in the region and ask that they continue to keep us briefed.

Energy

¶9. (C) Turkey wishes to be a transit hub for gas and oil to Europe and world markets, but faces a challenge meeting its increasing domestic energy needs. Russia currently provides at least 65% of Turkey's gas, Iran almost 20%, and Ankara is looking to Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Turkmenistan to help meet future energy needs and diversify its import dependence. Turkey must find a compromise solution with Azerbaijan that leaves enough gas to support new pipeline infrastructure to Europe. The U.S. can help Turkey meet its energy needs by supporting non-gas electricity projects and energy conservation.

Cyprus

¶10. (C) The first comprehensive talks to reunify Cyprus since the Annan Plan's failure in 2004 began September 3 under UN sponsorship. Difficult issues and red lines abound, but initial signs are good, and GOT officials are reasonably optimistic that this process could have legs. The Turks have

said little publicly and appear to be giving Turkish Cypriot leader Talat room to work. It would be helpful for the GOT to continue publicly to embrace the UN-led talks and to affirm support for the kind of Turkish troop withdrawals envisioned in Annan if a suitable overall package is negotiated.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

¶11. (C) Turkey is very engaged in NATO efforts in Afghanistan, but has misgivings. Former Deputy Chief of Defense Gen. Saygun complained in July that NATO needs a new strategy on Afghanistan, more emphasis on training and equipping, and a substitute livelihood for drugs. Turkey has 800 troops in ISAF and a lead role in the Wardak PRT, has pledged an additional \$100m in economic aid and two OMLTs, and supports the Afghan National Army (ANA), but has not budgeted on additional forces for ISAF or taking on combat roles. Turks are very concerned about recent developments in Pakistan. We should review with GOT officials the results of recent discussions in Washington, Kabul and elsewhere about Afghan strategy and Pakistan. We should urge more support now for the ANA, help to the Afghans as they consolidate control over greater Kabul security, and additional forces for ISAF.

Domestic Politics and Reforms

¶12. (C) On the domestic front, the Constitutional Court did not ban PM Erdogan and his ruling party for anti-secular activities,⁸ but delivered a fine and a stern warning. A consensus-oriented government agenda focused on economic development and reforms will help discourage fears of continued polarization, but it is unclear yet whether PM Erdogan gets this message. It will be helpful to urge Turkish authorities strongly to reengage on the EU reform agenda.

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